

Illinois Veteran News

An Update from the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs ★ 4th Quarter

★ From the Director

On June 5, 2018, Governor Bruce Rauner introduced Retired Brigadier General Stephen K. Curda, Ph.D. as the new Director for the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs at our Quincy Veterans Home. Director Curda stated, "I am humbled and honored to be asked to serve in this position. I look forward to working with all IDVA employees to provide the very best support for our over 700,000 veterans in this great state."



Director Curda has served in the US military for over 30 years in both active duty, National Guard and Reserve positions. He has commanded units at every echelon from Platoon, Company, Battalion, Brigade and two General Officer level commands. He is an Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) veteran having deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. His numerous awards and decorations include the Army Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Army Service Commendation Medal, the Army Service Achievement Medal, various campaign and service medals and the Parachutist Badge to include foreign jump wings from Canada and Italy.

He is a graduate of the U.S. Army War College and holds a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and Instructional Technology. Prior to serving in this position, Dr. Curda served as a tenured Associate Professor at the National College of Education and as Senior Advisor to the President of the University on Veteran Student education issues. He has previously held faculty positions at Florida State University, the University of Toledo, and the University of West Florida as a professor of Instructional Technology. He has served in a variety of administrative positions, to include Vice-President of Argosy University Online, and Director of Distance Learning with both the Joint Special Operations University in Hurlburt Field, Florida and the Air University in Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama. He and his wife, Dr. Leslie Curda, are blessed with five children - Riley, Piper, Major, Glory, and Saylor.



Governor Bruce Rauner introduced Retired Brigadier General Stephen K. Curda, Ph.D. as the new Director for the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs

Our mission at the IDVA is very simple. To serve those who have served. In doing so, we serve not only the men and women who have worn the uniform, but also their families. It is our privilege to be able to help our veterans receive the benefits they have earned through service to our nation. Our goal is to empower our veterans and their families to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

We know there are many veterans within our great state who do not require any assistance – but we still want to encourage you to "Stand Up and Be Counted!" by registering with your local VSO. In doing so, you're helping IDVA to do a better job of planning for services, seeking federal funding and understanding the needs of our veteran communities statewide. [Click here to register.](#)

We Thank you for your service and for your sacrifice and we at the IDVA look forward to offering our services to You.

★ Elisabeth Pennix named Acting Assistant Director



It is my pleasure and honor to serve as the Acting Assistant Director for the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs. Over the past five years, I have observed from the inside how hard we work collectively to provide exceptional service to our Illinois veterans. Our mission is critical in that we provide direct health care to the veterans in our Homes, we connect our veterans to vital assistance programs, and we file benefit claims on behalf of our veterans. We are operating seamlessly in a time of change and transition. I am incredibly proud of your continued faithful service to our veterans and our mission. I encourage each of you to keep doing your best professionally and personally. Together, we will continue to adapt, change, and grow as an agency to meet our mission with excellence.

Ms. Pennix served as our Acting Director until Mr. Curda was named by the Governor.

★ News from Home



Manteno Home

On Saturday, April 7th the Manteno Veterans home were entertained with Upcoming Country Music Star, Allie Colleen (Garth Brooks - daughter) who shared a morning of country music and guitar. All enjoyed photos and autographs! We are looking forward to her latest music coming out late in the year!

Illinois Veterans Home Manteno recently received the 2017 Safe Facility Award by Senior Crime Stoppers for ensuring a ZERO TOLERANCE TO CRIME. Providing a safe environment for residents, family and employees.

Accepting the award Administrator, Lester E. Robertson Jr. (retired) and Chief of Security Bob Lathim



A congratulation to Manteno Veterans Home Janis Cadieux for being a 2018 outstanding volunteer nominee! Janis was honored at the Recognition Luncheon on Friday, April 20th at the Kankakee Country Club. The annual event is hosted by the Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley and the United Way. Janis touches many hearts here at the Manteno Veterans Home. She makes a difference each visit!

★ News from Home

Anna Veteran Home

Some of the employees of the Anna Veterans Home ran in an Ink Color Run to benefit one the local charities. It appears all had a fun time! Starting with the top row from left to right: Donna Murray, Business Administrator; Melissa Tripp, Activity Program Aide; Rich Tripp, Physical Therapy Aide; Angela Simmons, Administrator; Melanie McReynolds, HR Specialist; Melissa Waun LPN. The rest were friends and family who were on the team.



Quincy Veteran Home

Congratulations to RN Randy Hoffsuemmer (Markword Nursing) for being named the 2018 recipient of the Patty Goehl Award for Excellence in Nursing (as well as the May Employee of the Month at the Quincy Veterans Home)! Randy is pictured with Administrator Troy Culbertson, his wife, Janet, and two of the five children (and one beautiful grandchild) of Patty and Lee Goehl. The next time you see him, please congratulate Randy and thank him for his commitment to excellence in nursing at IVHQ!

★ Illinois State Fair



Join for a wonderful day at the Illinois State Fair and the DuQuoin State Fair. We will have our Celebration of Life Service for the Gold Star Families, Lunch, Drill Team Competition, Benefits Expo and Job Fair at BOTH Locations. And we will end the day with a Veteran's Day Parade through the fairgrounds. We will be announcing the **ILLINOIS VETERANS' PATRIOTIC VOLUNTEER AND APPRECIATION AWARD** and the **ILLINOIS VETERANS' BUSINESS APPRECIATION AWARD**. Go to <https://www2.illinois.gov/veterans/programs/Pages/Awards.aspx> for nomination guidelines and a nomination form. Deadline to nominate is July 15, 2017.

It will be an enjoyable day to celebrate! We hope you can join us!

★ Fishing for Freedom - Illinois Veterans Home - Quincy

Fishing for Freedom hosted a day of fishing with our residents on June 2nd, 2018 at Lake Illinois at the Veterans Home in Quincy. Approx. 50 residents of the home participated in the event. There were over 100 volunteers from Fishing for Freedom who came to help. The IL Department of Natural Resources assisted us with stocking the lake with catchable fish. Plenty of catfish, bass, crappie & bluegills!



Resident Eugene Boehle pictured with his catfish and volunteers (Cindy Tossick in the blue t-shirt)



Resident Kenny Geschwandner and his daughters, Leslie Geschwandner and Barbara Huber with his nice catch!



*Residents & Volunteers Fishing at Lake Illinois.
How many fish stories were created at this moment?*



Brigadier General Roy Webb presenting John Bradford, resident with Fishing For Freedom Medal.

★ Honor 200

Nominate an Illinois Veteran

Honor 200 will recognize Veterans across Illinois who go above and beyond service to their fellow Veterans and Communities. In partnership with the Illinois Bicentennial Office the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs will honor the work of 200 Veterans from across the State whose contributions are above and beyond the call of duty. Nominations will be evaluated on their achievements and on the extent to which their contributions have aided, benefited and provided inspiration to their community. To find the nomination guidelines and nomination form, please go to our website – www.illinois.gov/vetans and click on **Honor 200**

The Boeing Company, Walgreens and Com Ed are the Presenting Sponsors of the Illinois Bicentennial Veterans Program and Honor 200 Program.



★ IDVA Calendar

7/04 Independence Day - Office Closed
7/13 Veteran Hiring Event - Springfield - BOS Center
7/13 American Legion Convention - Springfield
8/06 Purple Heart Day
8/12 Veterans Day – Illinois State Fair - Springfield
8/26 Veterans Day – DuQuoin State Fair - DuQuoin

Find details about all these events and others on our Events page of our website -

<https://www.illinois.gov/veterans/about-us/events/Pages/default.aspx>

★ Follow us



IDVA website

www.illinois.gov/veterans

Facebook

www.facebook.com/IllinoisDepartmentOfVeteransAffairs

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/IllinoisWomenVeterans/#>

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/ILVetsAffairs>

LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/il-dva>

★ New Employees



Philip J. Byler, started his employment with IDVA on 5/1/2018, in the Records Section of the Operation and Programs Division. He was a Specialist in the Army as a 98G Voice Interceptor, in Signal Intelligence, serving from 1992 – 1996. He lives in Bloomington, IL. His son, Dakota, age 20, lives with him and is a student at Heartland Community College. Philip came to us from The Department of Human Services. He enjoys hiking and flag football.



Marc Grose joined the agency in May and is the new VSO in Peoria County. Marc retired after 30 years of service in the U.S. Navy as a Hospital Corpsman and Command Master Chief. He is a veteran of Desert Shield/Desert Storm and made several deployments in support of GWOT operations. He comes to us from Illinois Department of Employment Security where he served as an Employment Security Program Representative. Marc and his wife Michelle make their home outside Galesburg and in his free time he fishes, golfs and lives life to the fullest.



Debbie Fuehrer is the new VSO in Winnebago County. Prior to joining IDVA, Debbie Fuehrer was a Driver's License Hearing Officer with the Secretary of State's office for the last 3-years in the Rockford and Freeport areas. Before this role, Fuehrer was a Public Service Representative also with the Secretary of State's office for 4-years; where she provided exceptional customer service. Fuehrer is a U.S. Air Force veteran and holds a bachelor's degree in management and leadership from Judson University. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time and staying active in sports with her husband, Derek and 3 children, Nahli, Madden, and Evelyn.



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